

echoed in Plotinus (6.7.22) and in a different world again when in St John of the Cross the human soul lies on the breast of her divine lover and drinks his wine (*El cántico espiritual*). These three experiences are closely similar, but the differences must be traced with anxious care if the history of this experience is not to strike us with a chill of unreality.

That Dr Rist has in some places minimized the differences between Plato and the later tradition

of Platonic thought by no means nullifies the whole of his work. To relate the new experience of Christianity with the human but not specifically Christian experience which finds one of its fullest expressions in the course of Greek philosophy is of the substance of Christian rationality. It is high praise of Dr Rist's work to say that it contributes to this theme.

Denis O'Brien

CHRISTIANITY AND POETRY by Elizabeth Jennings. *Burns and Oates, 9s. 6d.*

Miss Jennings's thought grows as she writes this book, and so does the reader's as he reads. After reading the last three chapters and the conclusion, it is illuminating to go back and read the introduction again. Thoughts which in the introduction are inchoate become explicit and firm in the conclusion. She makes one clear statement in the conclusion, about the relation of religion and art: 'many will argue that religion satisfies man's spirit, not any of the manifestations of art; my answer to this would be that, at its greatest heights, the two converge'. And again, by the time we reach the end of the book there is a much clearer understanding of the role that imagination plays since the Incarnation.

Not that this is a book which sets out to establish a strong case. Indeed, this is a subject on which there is ample room for discussion and opinion. But (and this is even more important) it is a subject which cannot profitably be discussed unless one or two very firm and clear points have been made: the nature of poetry must be as clearly as possible defined, and we must decide firmly whether the phrase 'Christian poetry' has any precise meaning. Miss Jennings makes both these things clear at the outset. Poetry does not exist for the sake of religion – that would be a betrayal of art – nor does religion exist for poetry. 'There is a poetic morality as well as a religious one, and every poet is bound by the first, even if not by the second'. So Christian poetry is not that kind of verse which 'has designs upon' the reader (if it qualifies for the title

at all it is probably very bad poetry); nor is it that type of verse – hymns, for example – which celebrates Christian themes (this may or may not be poetry at all).

The definition of Christian poetry lies between the two statements, namely, 'if a poem does not contain the whole man it might as well not exist at all', and 'a man or woman may write poems that are truly Christian without quite realizing it (Dylan Thomas, who wrote verse in praise of a God in whom, he said, he did not believe, is a good example)'. Poetry therefore is not Christian because of its theme or because of the religious affiliation of its writer, but through the all-pervading impact on it, willy nilly, of the Incarnation. Miss Jennings does not agree with Auden when he says that the Incarnation put an end to all claims of the imagination to be the faculty which manifests what is truly sacred and what is profane. She maintains that the Incarnation was a beginning rather than an end, and that since the coming of Christ images have a fuller and more manifold life, and that age by age men as different as Langland and Baudelaire, Browning and Eliot, Wordsworth and David Jones bring forth images that live with something of the life of Christ. For making poetry is not making a statement, it is a bringing into being. 'All making is a small participation in the divine and unceasing act of creation; and this is true whether the poet is aware of it or not.'

Miss Jennings brings forward ample evidence to support her case. Unfortunately through the

necessary limitations imposed on her by the length of her book the treatment of individual writers is almost always exceedingly brief and leaves much to be added by the reader. She has however, a gift for condensation and is never, I believe, guilty of an unjust statement. Her

vignette of Hopkins on page 90 is masterly. This is a book which will repay reading. I only hope that Miss Jennings will in several future books pursue some of the hares she has raised in this

Gerard Meath, O.P.

IN THE SERVICE OF THE LORD: the autobiography of Bishop Otto Dibelius. Translated by Mary Ilford. *Faber and Faber, 36s.*

It will no doubt always remain a debatable point whether autobiographies should be written at all. On the one hand, such writing will inevitably involve the danger of undue concern with oneself and one's own achievements (or failures), considered to be of interest and possible benefit to the public at large. On the other hand, God does use human agents in the carrying out of his plans and the example of quite a few of the saints shows that autobiography can be written to the greater honour and glory of God and for the benefit of others. But perhaps the most reasonable point of view on this matter will be that the personal story of someone who has been at the heart of greater interior or historical events can satisfy our innate desire to have a 'peep behind the scenes' and in certain cases even to derive inspiration from it.

The autobiography of Otto Dibelius, Bishop of the Evangelical Church in Germany for Berlin and Brandenburg, is a well-written, easily readable and excellently translated book. It is not the account of a systematic theologian or spiritual writer, but first and foremost of a faithful pastor of souls and of a believer who has suffered in the

courageous defence of his faith. The earlier chapters of the book in particular reveal a personality of great simplicity, integrity and sound common sense, while the later chapters provide some interesting insights into the struggles of a spiritual leader and of the Protestant churches in Germany under the National Socialist and Communist régimes. Within this particular framework – and as Superintendent-General, bishop, chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany and one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches from 1954 to 1961 – Bishop Dibelius has been very much at the hub of affairs and in personal contact with many of the leading churchmen of his day. These facts alone give his story more than usual interest. As he himself states rather modestly in the Foreword: '... some might find it useful to learn how a man in a position of responsibility within the church conceived of his office in times of appalling upheaval, and tried to carry it out. . . . What I have tried to describe is not a life but a ministry.'

Karl-H. Kruger

OUT OF THIS WORLD by Monica Lawlor. *Sheed and Ward, 15s.*

This is a pioneering book. The Newman Demographic Survey first showed us how the techniques of the social sciences can be used to help the Church in this country take stock and know herself. This book attempts to do something more delicate and more profound: to find out,

carefully and systematically, how Catholics really think and feel about the practice of the faith, using the tools given us by experimental psychology.

Four studies are reported here. The first tested the hypothesis that certain personality types